

This should have been cut in half at the very least.

There are some scenes with good emotions, but overall there is so much useless drivel shoved in that is there for no other reason than to drag the story out as long as possible. The characters seem to spend half the book just debating, uselessly, what the problem is. And it's painful to read.

It's very clear that The Murderbot Diaries are not the kind of stories that should be dragged out into true novel-length stories. There simply isn't enough depth to them for novels. If there were, they would have all been full-length novels from the start.

But these are simple, shallow stories with simple, shallow characters. And there's nothing wrong with that when all you're doing is telling "long short stories". There's not enough substance to any of these characters or the setting to force into more than 35,000 words out of them without having to use a ton of useless filler, which is what happened here.

It feels like Martha Wells was told she needed to write a full-length novel, with no ability to not do that, and this is the result. A short story that would have been fine on its own, now dragged out far past what it should have been.

The parts that are good are good. They're what makes The Murderbot Diaries so enjoyable to read. But they're buried under so much useless weight it's hard to enjoy this book even with the good parts to look forward to.

Like I said, there's nothing wrong with having simple characters and settings. Different stories require different levels of depth. "Long short stories" don't require complex worldbuilding and deep characters, they just need an entertaining plot "of the week".

But that's not how full length novels work. You can't just take a short story and stretch it out and shove useless filler into the gaps and hope no one will notice it's not actually a novel. I assume that this was due to pressure on the publisher's side or something, but I could be wrong, and that doesn't magically make this

book any better to read even if we have an explanation for why it's so bad.

If this had been cut down to the regular 30ish thousand words of the preceeding Murderbot books, I would have given this four stars. (It would get 5 stars if Martha Wells would stop being a coward and actually have Murderbot tell people its pronouns are it/its, or deal with gender in any educated way, but that's clearly asking too much of someone whose been so dedicated to biological essentialism for so long.)

I spent 30 whole dollars on this book that I could have spent on groceries instead, and I regret every cent I spent. I thought this was going to be an amazing, in-depth novel that I could reread and cherish for the rest of my life. But no. It's a short story stretched past its capacity with bullcrap as the filler, and all the problems of the rest of the series added in to make it worse.

There continues to be no real stakes to any of the drama. Murderbot and anyone else who gets injured will be magically cured like it never happened before

the book is over. It doesn't matter how catastrophic or horrifying the injury, it'll always get whisked away by magical healing, without even any scars to show for it.

I've said it before and I'm gonna have to keep saying it. Martha Wells cannot stand the idea of characters "losing" in any real way, and apparently she considers being physically disabled a form of losing, so it doesn't matter how many times Murderbot or any other one of her heroes gets an arm chopped off, or ripped in half, or shot, or blown up, or eaten by a graboid, because it will always be magically fixed like it never happened.

Murderbot will never have scars from anything that happens to it, it will never be physically disabled from any of these injuries, because despite the fact that Martha Wells read The Imperial Radch series and decided to write this from being inspired by it, she apparently missed the whole part where you're supposed to let your characters injuries matter, and treat physically disabled people with respect :/ Or you know, the part where gender isn't something you can

magically tell from looking at someone, and the only way to know someone's pronouns is by asking. She just loves biological essentialism too much for that.

Don't let anyone tell you this series is deep and amazing representation for trans / nonbinary / aroace people. It's not. It's just nothing but dehumanizing stereotypes with nothing to make it actually revolutionary. She won't even let the damn protagonist tell people its pronouns are it/its, or have anyone ever ask. Because the reality of nonbinary people is apparently just too cringey to write about.

2/5 stars for continuing all the same problems of the rest of her writing, and for stretching a short story into the length of a terrible, badly written, 90% pointless filler "novel" that cost me \$30 I can't ever get back.

Oh and lest I forget, the title of this book is just as meaningless as the rest of the books in this series. I genuinely feel like she's picking the titles of these books by just having a list of "cool scifi words" that she picks from at random. There is not a single book

in this series where the title tells you anything about the story you'll find within it, and they're so meaningless and random most people can't even remember which title goes to what story, even when they like it!